



# NEWS RELEASE

Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management  
1800 Marquess St. – Las Cruces, NM 88005  
Alan Ables, Public Affairs Officer – 505/525-4488

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **For Additional Information**

Jack Barnitz, 505/525-4300

### **BLM Schedules Prescribed Burn in “Boot Heel”**

LAS CRUCES – The U.S. Bureau of Land Management plans to ignite a prescribed burn in a 19,000-acre portion of the Big Hatchet Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA), according to BLM-Las Cruces Field Office Manager Amy Lueders. The burn is scheduled to begin May 27 in the WMA about 20 miles south of Hachita in Hidalgo County.

“The burn coincides with the driest and warmest part of the year, the same period in which most natural fires occur. The difference will be that instead of lightning, a ‘helitorch’ will be used to ignite the fire,” Lueders said.

The goal is to simulate effects of a natural fire and make overgrown habitat available to desert bighorn sheep, the species of primary management concern in the WMA.

Desert bighorn sheep rely mainly on sight to detect predators and require open areas in steep, rugged terrain. “Brush and tree cover have increased because large-scale natural fires no longer burn through the range with the same frequency they once did. After the burn, the bighorn sheep will have a better chance at avoiding predators, such as mountain lions,” according to Jack Barnitz, BLM wildlife management biologist.

Weather conditions permitting, the burn will last about three days, during which the Big Hatchet WMA will be closed to visitors. Smoke from the burn may be visible in Hidalgo Grant and Luna Counties.

Additional information is available by contacting Barnitz or Ryan Whiteaker at 505/525-4300.